



Congressman Tim Bishop

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BISHOP RECEIVES COMMITMENT PLUM ISLAND WILL NOT BECOME BIOSAFETY LEVEL 4 FACILITY

Secretary Ridge Makes Pledge in Meeting with Senator Clinton, Congressman Bishop

Washington, DC—Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) met today with Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge to discuss the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. During the meeting, which was held in Clinton's office, Ridge assured Bishop that Plum Island would not become a Biosafety Level 4 facility. The Department of Homeland Security took over Plum Island as of June 1.

"Families from Orient Point to Riverhead and beyond, will sleep better knowing that Plum Island will not study diseases like the Ebola Virus," Bishop said. "Throughout this process, I have worked to make sure that we protect our community. I am very pleased that Secretary Ridge has made this commitment to help us do that."

Bishop termed the meeting productive and it covered numerous topics, including federalizing the Plum Island workforce and hiring back qualified workers, improving communications with first responders and putting in place mechanisms for continued dialogue. Bishop and Clinton had sought the Ridge meeting since a February town hall meeting on Plum Island in Mattituck, which drew more than 500 residents. The Ridge meeting was previously scheduled but was delayed because of pressing homeland security issues.

"I hope this is the beginning of a new relationship between our community and Plum Island," Bishop said. "Secretary Ridge has assured me that he is committed to improving the relationship with our community, and this meeting is a solid first step."

On the subject of federalizing the workforce, Bishop encouraged Ridge to give special consideration to the qualified workers employed on Plum Island prior to the strike. Bishop recognizes that these workers are familiar with the antiquated and unique systems in place on the Island, and are equipped with the institutional knowledge so important to safe and effective operations. Ridge said he would look into the issue.

Bishop stressed the need to continue to keep open the lines of communication and will meet in the upcoming weeks with Plum Island's new director Dr. Maureen McCarthy, the acting director for research and development in the department's science and technology directorate to follow-up.

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